The Courtin'

James Lowell

Pictured by A. J. Keller

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SENIOR CITIZEN'S CENTRE

SENIOR CITIZEN'S CENTRE

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by

Hugh Anson-Cartwright

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The Courtin

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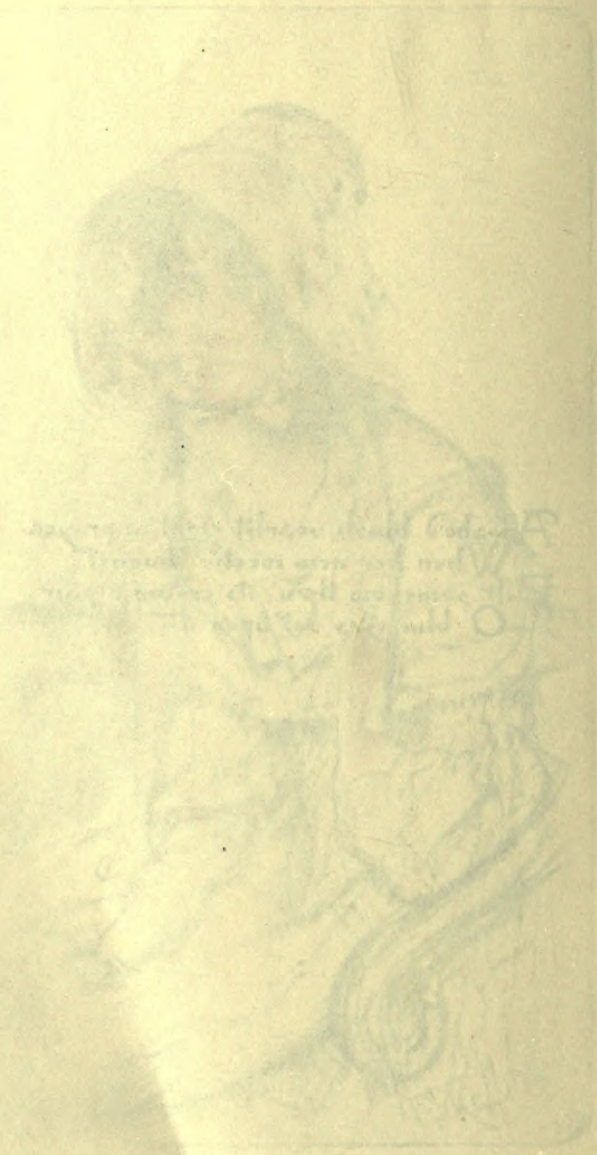
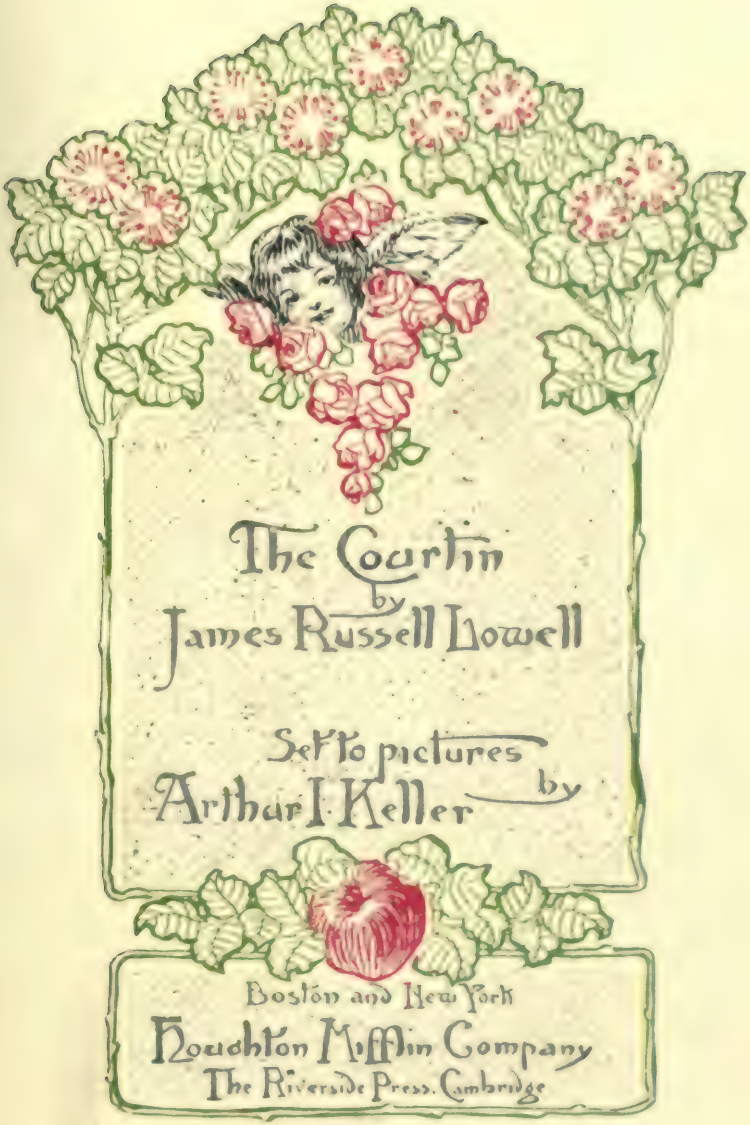
When her new meetin' bunnet
Felt somehow thru' its crown a pair
O' blue eyes sot upon it.




The Courtin
by
James Russell Lowell
Set to pictures by
Arthur I. Keller
Boston and New York
Houghton Mifflin Company
The Riverside Press, Cambridge

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

"THE COURTIN'," *in its final form as here printed, made its first appearance at the end of the Introduction to the Second Series of "The Biglow Papers." Twelve stanzas of the poem, afterwards somewhat revised, had before been published in connection with the "Notices of an Independent Press" which the author prefixed to the first series of "Biglow Papers." His explanation of the circumstances is given in the Introduction to the Second Series as follows: —*

"*The only attempt I had ever made at anything like a pastoral (if that may be called an attempt which was the result almost of pure accident) was in 'The Courtin'.' While the introduction to the First Series was going through the press, I received word from the printer that there was a blank page left which must be filled. I sat down at once and improvised another fictitious 'notice of the press,' in which, because verse would fill up space more cheaply than prose, I inserted an extract from a supposed ballad of Mr. Biglow. I kept no copy of it, and the printer, as directed, cut it off when the gap was filled. Presently I began to receive letters asking for the rest of it, sometimes for the* balance *of it. I had none, but to answer such demands, I patched*

a conclusion upon it in a later edition. Those who had only the first continued to importune me. Afterward, being asked to write it out as an autograph for the Baltimore Sanitary Commission Fair, I added other verses, into some of which I infused a little more sentiment in a homely way, and after a fashion completed it by sketching in the characters and making a connected story. Most likely I have spoiled it, but I shall put it at the end of this Introduction, to answer once for all those kindly importunings."

As the result of much inquiry the publishers have recently learned the history of the autograph copy of the poem above referred to, and by the kind permission of the present owner it is reproduced in this volume. At the time of the Baltimore Fair, Colonel Alexander Bliss (then stationed at Fort McHenry) and Mr. John P. Kennedy made a large collection of autographs, to be lithographed for sale at the fair as "Autograph Leaves." The originals, except those that were merely lent, were bound, and the volume became the property of Colonel Bliss. It is now owned by his son, Mr. William J. F. Bliss, of Baltimore. Among the original manuscripts thus preserved is "The Courtin'."

The poem has long been popular as a charming and humorous Yankee idyl composed in the genuine old New England dialect. As interpreted by Mr. Keller's sympathetic brush it will give a new pleasure to its readers.

Boston, September, 1909.

The Courtin'

The Gourtin'

God makes sech nights, all white an' still
Fur 'z you can look or listen,
Moonshine an' snow on field an' hill,
All silence an' all glisten.

Zekle crep' up quite unbeknown
An' peeked in thru' the winder,
An' there sot Huldy all alone,
'ith no one nigh to hender.

A fireplace filled the room's one side
With half a cord o' wood in —
There warn't no stoves (tell comfort died)
To bake ye to a puddin'.

The wa'nut logs shot sparkles out
Towards the pootiest, bless her,
An' leetle flames danced all about
The chiny on the dresser.

Agin the chimbley crook-necks hung,
An' in amongst 'em rusted
The ole queen's-arm thet gran'ther Young
Fetched back f'om Concord busted.

The very room, coz she was in,
Seemed warm f'om floor to ceilin',
An' she looked full ez rosy agin
Ez the apples she was peelin'.

The Courtin'

'T was kin' o' kingdom-come to look
On sech a blessed cretur,
A dogrose blushin' to a brook
Ain't modester nor sweeter.

He was six foot o' man, A 1,
Clear grit an' human natur',
None could n't quicker pitch a ton
Nor dror a furrer straighter.

He 'd sparked it with full twenty gals,
Hed squired 'em, danc'd 'em, druv 'em,
Fust this one, an' then thet, by spells—
All is, he could n't love 'em.

But long o' her his veins 'ould run
All crinkly like curled maple,
The side she breshed felt full o' sun
Ez a south slope in Ap'il.

She thought no v'ice hed sech a swing
Ez hisn in the choir;
My! when he made Ole Hunderd ring,
She *knowed* the Lord was nigher.

An' she 'd blush scarlit, right in prayer,
When her new meetin'-bunnet
Felt somehow thru' its crown a pair
O' blue eyes sot upun it.

THET night, I tell ye, she looked *some!*
She seemed to 've gut a new soul,
For she felt sartin-sure he 'd come,
Down to hèr very shoe-sole.

She heered a foot, an' knowed it tu,
A-raspin' on the scraper, —
All ways to once her feelins flew
Like sparks in burnt-up paper.

He kin' o' l'itered on the mat,
Some doubtfle o' the sekle,
His heart kep' goin' pity-pat,
But hern went pity Zekle.

An' yit she gin her cheer a jerk
Ez though she wished him furder,
An' on her apples kep' to work,
Parin' away like murder.

"You want to see my Pa, I s'pose?"
"Wal . . . no . . . I come dasignin'"—
"To see my Ma? She 's sprinklin' clo'es
Agin to-morrer's i'nin'."

To say why gals act so or so,
Or don't, 'ould be persumin';
Mebby to mean *yes* an' say *no*
Comes nateral to women.

The Courtin'

The Courtin'

He stood a spell on one foot fust,
Then stood a spell on t' other,
An' on which one he felt the wust
He couldn't ha' told ye nuther.

Says he, "I 'd better call agin;"
Says she, "Think likely, Mister:"
Thet last word pricked him like a pin,
An' . . . Wal, he up an' kist her.

When Ma bimeby upon 'em slips,
Huldy sot pale ez ashes,
All kin' o' smily roun' the lips
An' teary roun' the lashes.

For she was jes' the quiet kind
Whose naturs never vary,
Like streams that keep a summer mind
Snowhid in Jenooary.

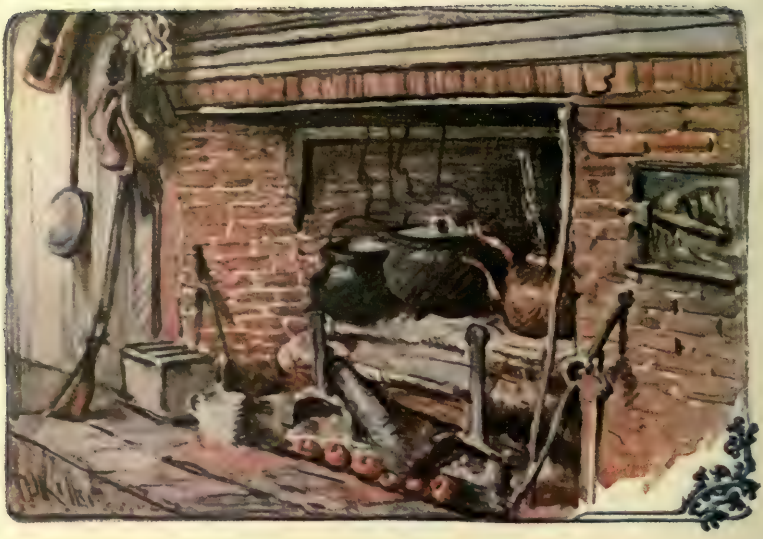
The blood clost roun' her heart felt glued
Too tight for all expressin',
Tell mother see how metters stood,
An' gin 'em both her blessin'.

Then her red come back like the tide
Down to the Bay o' Fundy,
An' all I know is they was cried
In meetin' come nex' Sunday.

God makes such nights, all
white an still

Tickle crept up quite unbeknown

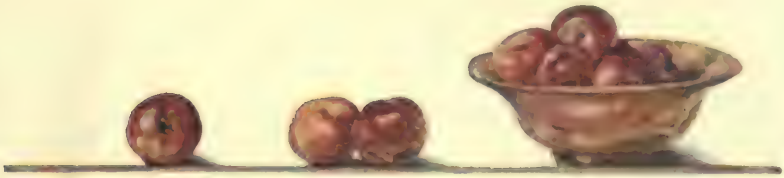
An' there sot Huldy all alone,
'ith no one nigh to hender.



A fireplace filled the room's one side
With half a cord o' wood in —

Ay little flames danced all about
The chimy on the dresser

An' she looked full ez rosy agin
Ez the apples she was pickin



'T was Kin' o' Kingdom-come to look
On sech a blessed critter.
A dogrose blushin' to a brook
Ain't modester nor sweeter.

He was six foot o' man, Al

He'd sparked it with full twenty gals
He squired 'em, danced 'em, drav 'em

First this one an' then that by spells—
All is he could get love 'em

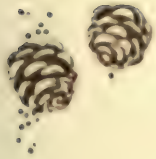
The side she breshed felt full o' sun
Ez a south slope in April

She thought no vice hed sech a swing
Ez hisn in the choir

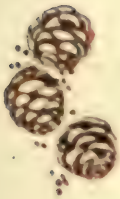
My: when he made Ole Hundred ring
She knowed the Lord was nigher

That night I tell ye, she looked some!
She seemed t've got a new soul.
For she felt sartin sure he'd come
Down to her very shoe sole

She heerd a foot an' knowed it tu
A-raspin' on the scraper.—



His heart hep goin pity-pat
But hern went pity Zeh le



An yit she gin her cheer a jerk
Ez though she wished him furder.
An' on her apples kep' to work.
Parin away like murder

"You want to see my Pa, I s'pose?"
"Wal . . . no . . . I come designin' —"

"To see my Ma! She's sprinklin' clo'es
Agin to-morrer's i'nin'"

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An' on which one he felt the wust
He could n't ha told ye nuther

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Says she. "Think likely, Mister."

That last word prickled him like a pin
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SENIOR CITIZEN'S CENTRE

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All kin' o' smily roun' the lips
An' teary roun' the lashes

The blood clost roun' her heart felt glued
Too tight for all expressin'.

Till mother see how mettērs stōod.
An gin em both her blessin

An' all I know is they was cried
In meetin' come nex' Sunday

END

Facsimile of the Original Manuscript

of

THE COURTIN'

The Courtin'

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Fur 'z you can look or listen,
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All silence an' all glisten.

Zekle crep' up quite unbeknown
An' peeked in thru the winder
An' there sot Huldy all alone
With no one nigh to hender.

A fireplace filled the room's one side
With half a cord o' wood in, —
There warn't no stoves till Comfort died,
To bake ye to a puddin'.

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Toward the pootiest, bless her!
An' little flames danced all about
The chiny on the dresser.

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J. M. Lowell

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